

# III

## General Considerations

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#### STANDARD

#### SPECIAL NEEDS OF *Juvenile Courts*

#### STANDARD

#### 1. Accessibility

The location of a courthouse should be readily accessible to the public and should take into consideration population growth patterns, public transportation, proximity to community center, and accessibility of court-related facilities.

In addition to the other considerations of accessibility, the location of a juvenile courthouse should be in close proximity to juvenile detention centers.

#### 2. Use of Elevators/Escalators

The mix of elevators and escalators should be chosen to enhance accessibility of all places in the courthouse, with consideration given to the separation provided for each of the three circulation zones (public, private, and secured) and to the needs of the handicapped. Functions with a high volume of traffic should be as close as possible to ground level. At least one elevator should be sized for freight.

*Comment*

Given the high volume of people at critical parts of the court day, providing for expeditious movement of people will enhance the efficient operation of the clerks and courtrooms. Arrangement of vertical circulation routes for detention should serve the maximum amount of courtrooms per elevator shaft.

**STANDARD****3. Provisions for Persons Who Are Handicapped**

Consideration should be given to the use of the courthouse by handicapped persons who are both users and staff. Elimination of architectural and transportation barriers for one part of the population should not create a barrier to another. (See other provisions herein for handicapped persons, Sections V.2.j. and V.3.d., Handicapped Access.)

*Comment*

Governmental regulations require handicapped access; however, courthouses can be built in substantial compliance with such regulations without every component of the building being handicapped accessible. For example, a percentage of the benches or jury seats should be accessible to those confined to wheelchairs.

**4. Area Divided into Different Circulation Zones****a. Public, Private, and Secured Circulation****STANDARD**

The courthouse should include three distinct circulation zones:

- (1) public circulation;
- (2) private circulation restricted to judges, jurors, and court staff; and
- (3) secured circulation for prisoners.

The circulation zones should not intersect, except in the courtrooms.

The court should have control and management over the space it occupies.

**STANDARD***continued*SPECIAL NEEDS OF  
*Juvenile Courts**Comment*

**This standard should not preclude development of alternative dispute resolution facilities that would not require secure custodial facilities and distinct circulation zones.**

In juvenile facilities, circulation zones must be designed to ensure safe movement of dependent children, separate from prisoners and detained minors.

California Code of Regulations, title 15, section 1105(c) (see Appendix A, page 81) requires court holding facilities to have paths of travel for inmates separate from those used by the public.

### b. Separate Entrance if Facility Is Shared

**STANDARD**

**There should be separate facilities for all court-related activities. Where facilities are shared with jails or other county services, courtrooms and administrative areas should be clearly identified and managed by the court.**

**Separate entrances should be provided wherever practicable. However, the architect and planner should be aware of the potential conflict of multiple entrances with the practicality of weapons screening. These considerations are particularly important if the optimum location for security screening is at entrances. Manpower costs for screening stations far outweigh equipment costs. The simple solution is to limit the number of public entrances to the building.**

SPECIAL NEEDS OF  
*Juvenile Courts**Comment*

There should be separate facilities for juvenile court-related activities. If the juvenile court is included in the general courthouse, facilities should be separate from those of the rest of the court.

The purpose is to preserve the confidentiality of juvenile proceedings.

**STANDARD****5. Power and Communications**

Spatial, environmental, acoustical, and other needs for the court's internal data processing system should be accommodated, including provision of an uninterrupted power source. The courthouse facility requires an internal data communication network as well as linkage to other county facilities in order to access existing and planned automated information systems.

**a. Distribution of Power and Communications**

A uniform power and communication distribution system should be planned with a raceway configuration compatible with workstation configurations, sizes, and future needs. The furniture system should maintain electrical and communication raceway capability.

**b. Computer Room**

In a larger courthouse, a room should be provided to house shared computer equipment (e.g., minicomputers, LAN file servers) and shared telecommunications equipment. The room should be located above ground level in order to avoid any risk of flooding, and preferably in the building core or on a windowless northern or eastern wall to avoid the heat of the sun.

Provision should be made for data communications closets. At least one closet per floor should be allocated.

Ample electrical service should be provided to support equipment that may be installed in the room, including devices that protect computer equipment from power fluctuations and outages.

An independent air conditioning unit with necessary electrical service and plumbing should be provided to service the room as required. The exception would be when the heat generated by the equipment is relatively low and can be dissipated by the building's standard air conditioning system.

Ample conduit should converge in the computer room to connect equipment located there with related peripheral equipment in the courthouse. In addition to the computer system that the court uses for case tracking and other administrative purposes, the room may house central components of other systems, such as those for video arraignment, telephones, and security.

**STANDARD**

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**Design should allow for installation of telephone lines for remote access to other computer systems.**

**An environmentally safe, emergency fire suppression system must be provided in the computer room. In the event that the system is triggered by mistake, a manual override should be provided.**

**A raised floor should be provided for relatively large installations of minicomputers, mainframes, or LAN file servers, to allow for the ambient cooling of equipment and to facilitate the routing of electrical lines and computer cables.**

**A ramp that conforms to state construction standards for accommodation of the disabled must be provided with any raised floor.**

**Additional areas, adjacent to the computer room if possible, should be provided for offices of data processing staff, storage of computer supplies, training, and centrally used printers.**

**c. Microwave and Satellite Dishes**

**Structural support should be provided for roof mounting of microwave and satellite dishes that may be required for video arraignment and other innovative applications that can enhance the court's efficiency.**

**d. Space for Facsimile Telecommunication Facilities**

**Space should be provided on each floor or other unit of a multicourt courthouse to include connections for state-of-the-art communications equipment—for example, facsimile telecommunications and copying machines—conveniently available to the courtrooms.**

## 6. Signs, Directions, and Information for the Public

### a. Signs, Directions for the Public

#### STANDARD

As part of the planning process, a program for sign utilization should be adopted that harmonizes with the circulation zones of the facility.

Attractive, contemporary, and legible signs of both directional and informational character should be incorporated into the interior design of all public areas. A specific and coordinated sign and labeling system should be integrated with the building graphics system.

Prominent posting of public notices and informational signs should be provided, multilingual where appropriate.

Braille lettering and audio signals should be provided at elevators and where appropriate.

### b. Information Booth

#### STANDARD

A building directory should be located near each major public entrance featuring a diagram that lists all major components in the building. In large courthouses, a staffed, clearly identified information desk or kiosk should also be located in a highly visible location near the main entrance.

#### *Comment*

In small to medium-sized courts it may be advisable to utilize an information center to assist the public.

#### SPECIAL NEEDS OF *Juvenile Courts*

Any information relating to juvenile matters must follow rules of confidentiality of juvenile proceedings.

## 7. Public Waiting Areas

#### STANDARD

Public waiting areas should include seating and be located as close as possible to areas of highest public use with easy access to restrooms, water fountains, and telephones. The size should be in proportion to the population to be served. Noise transmission from the waiting area to the courtroom must be minimized.

*Comment*

Hallways can be used as public waiting areas if they are of sufficient width and if a vestibule that provides a sufficient sound lock is installed at courtroom entrances.

## 8. Security

**STANDARD**

The courthouse design should provide a setting within which justice can be served without fear of disruption or harm. The design should provide for the protection of the people who occupy the courthouse, protection of the courthouse facility itself from damage, prevention of escape of those in custody, maintenance of judicial decorum in the courthouse, and protection of court records and documents. Design consideration must be given to the efficient and expeditious use of bailiffs in the entire facility.

Exterior glazing that encloses chambers, key staff offices, or courtroom space should be planned to shield occupants from gunfire or other physical means of threat.

Building exterior details should minimize the potential for placement of explosive devices.

Building access points should be in sight of a surveillance source and configured with unobtrusive barriers to prohibit violent entry by persons or vehicles.

At least one courtroom or more, depending upon anticipated needs, should be designed to accommodate trials that involve a high degree of risk to the participants. Such a courtroom should have electronic screening for all persons attending trial. This courtroom should be located where it can be isolated and cause the least amount of disruption and inconvenience to the other occupants of the facility.

*Comment*

These standards require the coordination of architectural design, particularly in controlling circulation in and around the building, with electronic and mechanical devices, trained personnel, and appropriate emergency procedures. The building envelope should be planned to take into account security considerations in the treatment of glazing, exterior physical detail, and placement of building access points.



*Comment*  
*continued*

Judicial staff, citizens, litigants, witnesses, attorneys, and other users of court facilities should be able to participate in court business with confidence in the arrangements for building and courtroom security.

Security not only should be flexible to deal with unpredictable sources of disorder, but also should be selective so that normal court building activities are not excessively disrupted when emergencies occur.

Internal security requires the design of three separate controlled circulation patterns for the public, prisoners, and judicial staff (see Section III.4.a., Public, Private, and Secured Circulation), with electronic and mechanical devices, trained personnel, and appropriate emergency procedures.

## 9. Fire Protection and Fire Alarm

**STANDARD**

**Integrated systems of fire detection, alarm, and suppression should be included in the design of new and remodeled facilities and should comply with California Code of Regulations, title 15, section 1105(b)(3); and California Code of Regulations, title 24, section 1013(b)(23)–(24) [see Appendix A, pages 81–85].**

*Comment*

Life safety and security are related concerns that help shape the modern courthouse facility. The focus should be on the safety of all people in the courthouse, the safe storage of records and documents, and the privacy of certain proceedings and records. Life safety is used in a restricted sense to refer to threats to life and property resulting from fire, explosions, or other emergencies. Since fire offers the most serious and prevalent threat, particularly in older courthouses, measures should be taken to reduce the consequences of fire to the courthouse and its users.

**STANDARD****10. Emergency Provisions**

An emergency plan should be adopted in tandem with design of the facility and in compliance with state law. Emergency plans should be tailor-made to each facility. Emergency power and lighting capacity will be required in selected areas of the courthouse facility. There should be an uninterrupted power source for the communications system.

**a. Emergency Plan**

The emergency plan should include procedures for evacuation of the building, recognition of possible bombs, telephone bomb threats, emergency medical aid, theft/robbery, hostage situations, civil disturbances, power/utility failure, and natural disasters.

**b. Power and Lighting**

Consideration of specific locations for emergency power and lighting should be addressed during the architectural design process in conjunction with the determination of the final facility configuration. Such an emergency power source should conform to the requirements specified in California Code of Regulations, title 24, article 700, part 3 [see Appendix A, page 86].

**c. Communications**

Dedicated 24-hour HVAC systems may be required and should be evaluated for special and unique areas, including computer and telephone equipment areas, as well as the enclosure for microfiche storage.

Courthouses may be equipped with building-wide public address systems to be located at the office of the sheriff, marshal, or clerk. These systems would reach all areas of the courthouse to announce any evacuation plan or the closing of the building.

## 11. Public Restrooms, Telephones, and Water Fountains

### STANDARD

Easily maintained, clean, modern restroom facilities and water fountains should be available in the vicinity of the public areas of the court. Public telephones should be available and should afford privacy. Such facilities should be designed for appropriate handicapped access. Public restrooms should not be located on a wall common to a courtroom, jury deliberation room, conference room, etc., for sound and security reasons.

## 12. Lighting

### STANDARD

The quality of lighting should take into consideration factors required for the task to be performed, including minimum foot candle readings at all points of work surface 30 inches above the floor for the following areas:

| Area                              | Foot Candles |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Courtroom Litigation Area         | 75-90        |
| Courtroom Public Area             | 30           |
| General Offices                   | 50           |
| Private Offices/Reception Areas   | 75-90        |
| Clerical Offices                  | 90-100       |
| Courtroom Conference Room         | 50           |
| Corridors, Lobbies, Waiting Rooms | 10-20        |
| Restrooms                         | 10-20        |
| Custodial, Inactive Storage       | 5-10         |
| Active Storage                    | 50           |
| Yard and Walks                    | 0.5-2.0      |
| Detention Areas                   | 30           |
| Indoor and Outdoor Parking        | 5            |
| Interview Room                    | 50           |

The above specifications are intended to be ranges, subject to review by a lighting engineer depending upon the specific project being planned.

Comment

To the extent possible, the quality of light must be sufficient to perform tasks required in each space without excess light that could result in inefficient energy consumption and unpleasant environmental conditions. Special requirements are referred to in Section IV.3., Courtroom Lighting.

STANDARD

13. Acoustics

Good acoustical design should ensure a minimum of interference with court operations, consisting of:

- a minimum of intrusive noise;
- acoustical conditions that assure accurate recording of proceedings; and
- access to the court by the deaf and hearing impaired.

Since noise control in court facilities is considered critical, the services of an acoustical consultant must be obtained for the courthouse and related spaces.

Sound Transmission Class (STC) levels required are:

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Judge's chambers and ancillary spaces               | STC—50    |
| Jury deliberation rooms and witness interview rooms | STC—50    |
| Courtroom   | STC—50    |
| Standard office space for court's personnel         | STC—25    |
| Conference room standard                            | STC—40–45 |

These specifications are subject to review by an acoustical engineer.

Comment

Good acoustical design that is conducive to court operations is an important consideration. It is essential that courtrooms be free of intrusive noises for orderly trial proceedings.

In the courtroom, an acoustical environment that blocks sound encroachment from outside the space must be provided. Within the room itself, background or ambient sound must be minimized. Specific sound, such as the judge's statements and those of the witnesses and the lawyers, must be enhanced. The court reporter, judge, clerk, attorneys, and jury must all be able to hear very accurately anything that is given in testimony. The judge must also be able to

*Comment*  
*continued*

communicate with attorneys in sidebar conversations that cannot be overheard. An audio system will electronically enhance the statements that need to be heard, and a well-designed sound management system will minimize background noise.

## 14. Parking

**STANDARD**

**Secure parking should be provided for each judicial officer, with access as direct to the private circulation system as possible.**

**Sufficient parking adjacent to the courthouse for the public should be provided when mass transit systems are not available.**